

## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis:

DECONSTRUCTING THE WALL: A  
Prototype for Alternative Housing

Sandra Oh Boun, Master of Architecture, 2018

Thesis Directed By:

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*“Whether I’m documented or not, I’m a human being. I used to think birds in a cage were so pretty but no one should be deprived of freedom-no one should be caged.”*

This project aims to address the social injustice of the treatment and living conditions of immigrants. Specifically, immigrants detained in detention centers and private facilities. Families, usually women and children, are placed in prison like conditions for long periods of time; these places are not suitable for children to live or experience. The purpose of this thesis is to create a better environment for families to be placed while waiting for the justice system.

DECONSTRUCTING THE WALL: A Prototype for Alternative Housing

by

Sandra Oh Boun

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the  
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
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## Dedication

*Dedicated to those who currently reside in detention centers who are hidden,  
forgotten and kept under lock and key.*

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my committee, Michael Abrams, Jana Vandergoot, Brian Kelly, for all their advice and challenging me throughout the thesis process. I would also like to thank Shorieh Talaat for being an encouraging mentor and for providing critic and assistance.

My family, especially my husband Robert Boun, for being my greatest supporter throughout my entire academic career. My parents, who inspired this thesis topic and instilled in me the importance of *dignity and respect*.

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## List of Abbreviations

AEDPA: Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act

CBP: Customs and Border Protection

DHS: Department of Homeland Security

ICE: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

IIRIRA: Illegal Immigration and Immigrant responsibility Act

NDS: National Detention Standards

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Migration

People immigrate to the United States (U.S.) for many reasons, which include: economic, political, religious persecution, environment, famine, poverty, war, and torture. They immigrate to the U.S., because the U.S. has always been portrayed as a country where dreams come true. However, that dream soon turns into a nightmare for many who are arrested and detained at the border. Others who are arrested have overstayed their visas, have crossed the border illegally previously, or are green card holders. Once arrested, they are confined in a detention facility and faced with navigating the immigration process on their own. These detention centers are only intended to serve as temporary holding facilities, a place where detainees are placed to wait out the immigration process. They are designed to meet the most basic human needs and to keep criminals in. Originally, designed as prisons, detention centers can leave one emotionally and mentally traumatized causing more harm than good; therefore it is important to review the impact of architecture and design on the lives of detainees in detention centers.

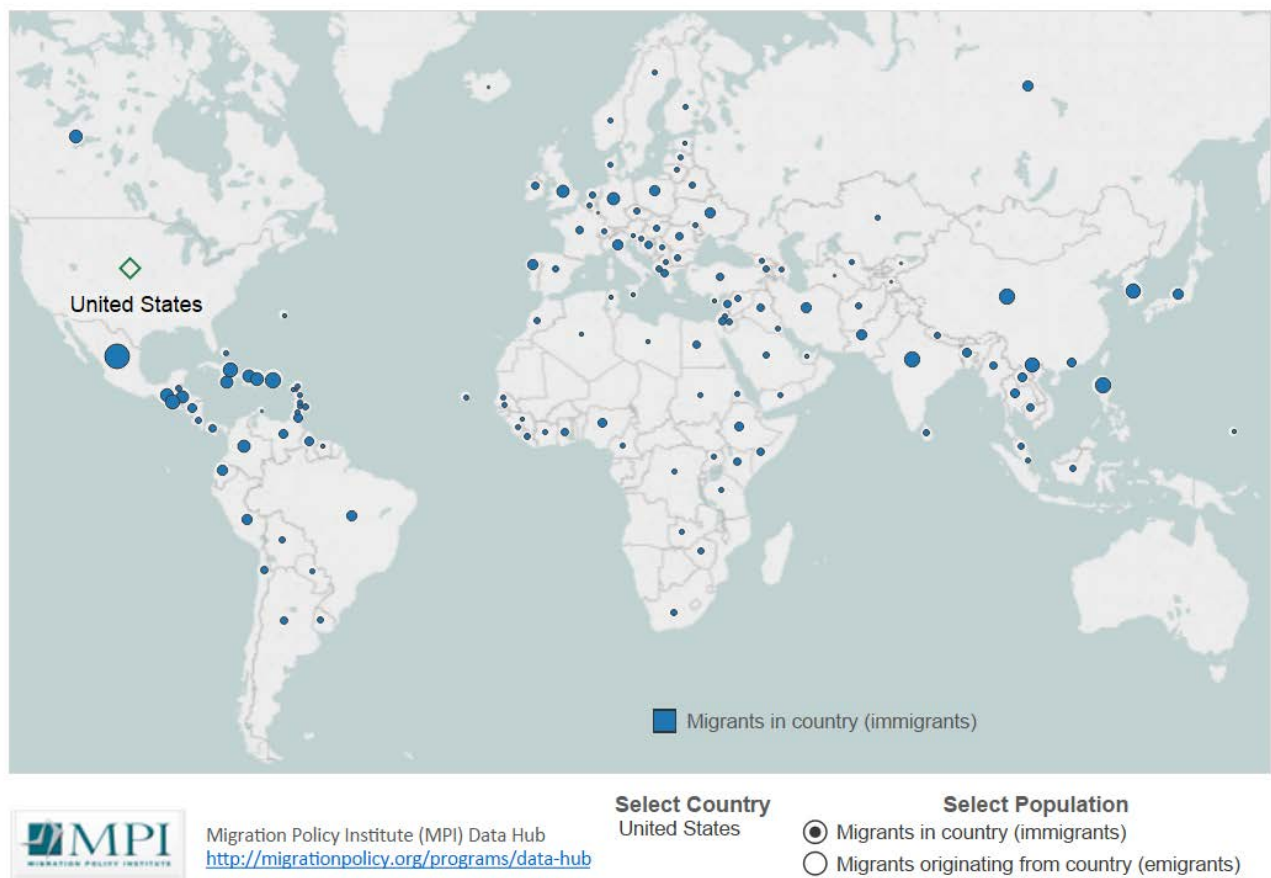
These individuals have faced harrowing obstacles and trauma on their journey to escape from war, environmental disasters and so on, yet many are turned away or arrested at the border. In response to the 9/11 attacks, the U.S. has become increasingly strict with national security and fearful of foreign travelers who enter the U.S. The fear of attack has led the U.S. to establish and manage the largest

immigration detention system in the world, and as a result, the U.S. has spent more on security enforcement than any other country.

To understand the scale of the U.S. detention system, of the total population of 324 million, 11 million are migrants who reside in the United States, a number which includes both refugees and asylum seekers. According to the Migration Policy Institute approximately 1.8 million people migrate to the United States every year.

Figure 1.1, is a map that shows the country of origin of migrants who enter the U.S.

*Figure 1.1*



Source: <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/immigrant-and-emigrant-populations-country-origin-and-destination?width=1000&height=850&iframe=true>

Migrants immigrate to the U.S. from all over the world, although one of the most common misconception is that all undocumented immigrants are from Mexico. This map shows that people immigrate from all over the world. Additionally, it is well documented that the largest migration routes are from Central and South America, and migrants traveling from these locations are either refugees or asylum seekers. The top countries of origin include Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and China. Most immigrate to escape violence in their country. Between 2011 and 2014, there was a surge of unaccompanied child migrants entering the U.S., most fleeing from recruitment into gangs, human trafficking, drugs, threats of murder and extreme poverty.

#### Arbitrary detention of migrants

As the number of detained immigrants increase, so has the number of detention facilities. Figure 1.3 shows detention centers around the world in comparison to the U.S., while Figure 1.4 shows the concentration of detention centers in the U.S. Currently, there are over 200 centers in operation in the U.S., making the U.S. detention system the largest in the world. Although, many would argue that these centers are there to ensure the public's safety, they do more harm than good for those confined. Note that these facilities were designed and intended only as short-term temporary facilities; however, individuals can and have been detained for months or even years waiting for the immigration and court system to process them. Those who are detained for long periods of time may suffer from mental health issues, due to lack of access to exercise, healthcare, and of the inhumane conditions of centers often

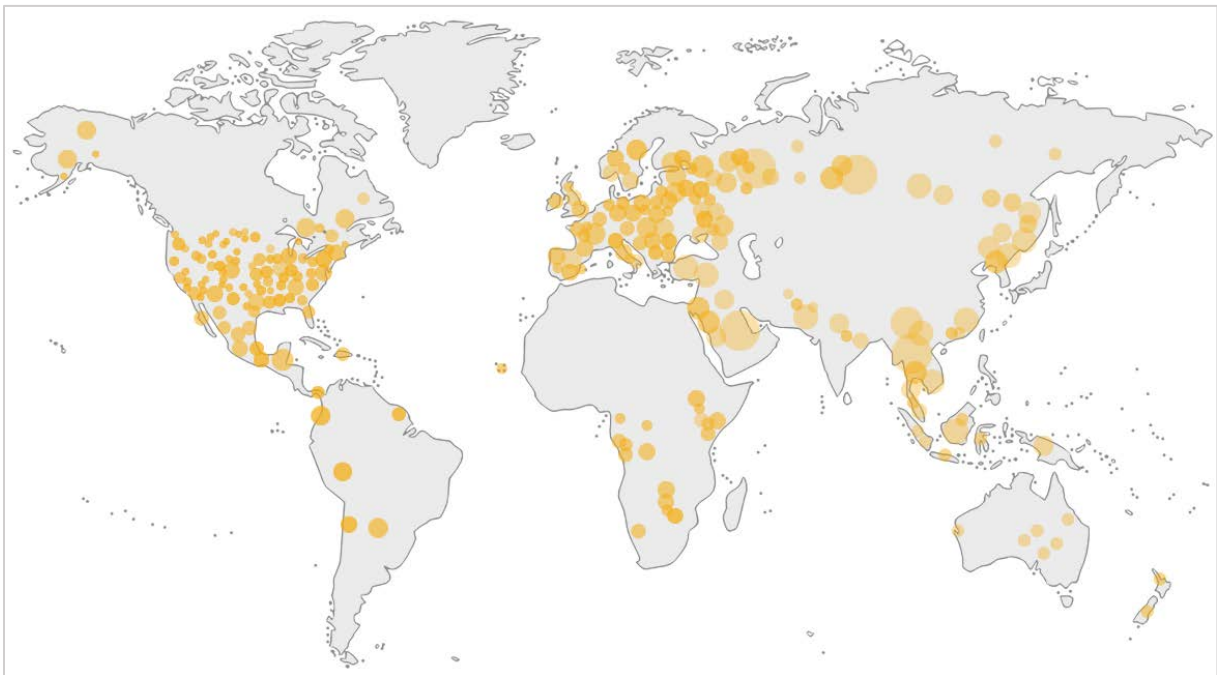
leading to depression and even suicide. Chapter 2 will focus more on the physical conditions of these centers.

Figure 1.2



*Image by Author.*

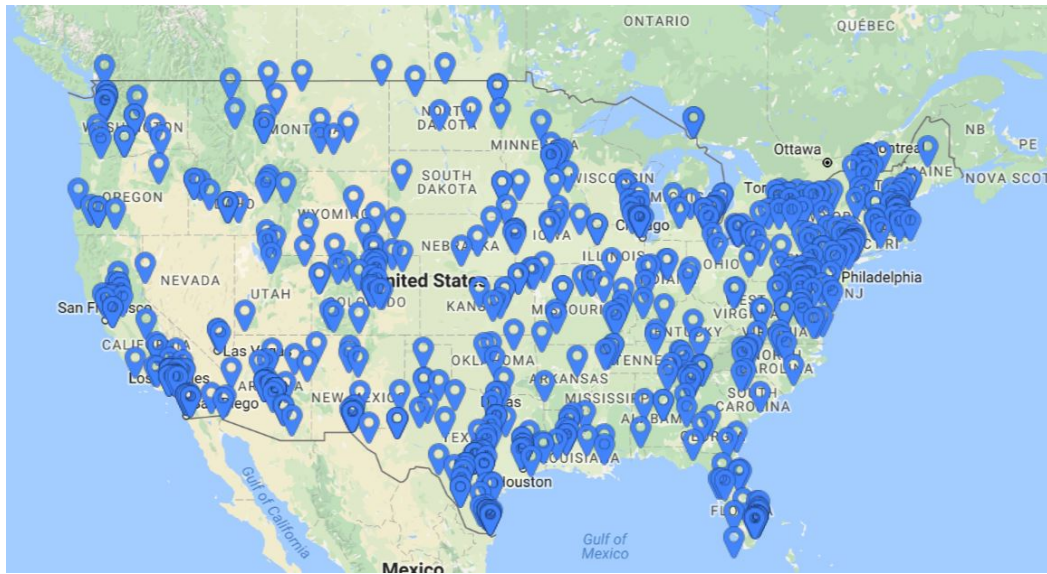
Figure 1.3



*Detentions centers worldwide. Size of circles indicate amount of facilities. Image by Author.*



Figure 1.4



Source: <http://www.endisolation.org/resources/immigration-detention/>

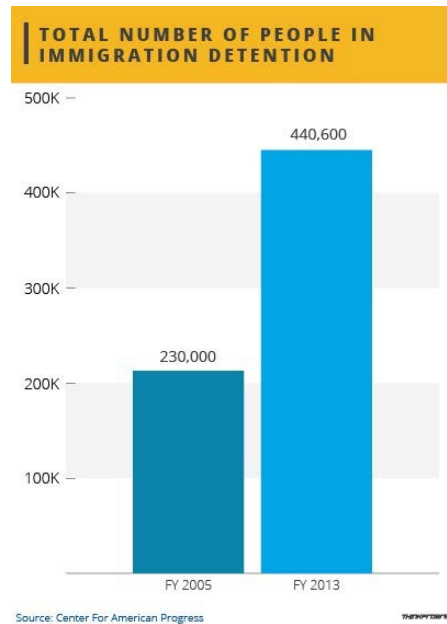
Each year, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) undertakes immigration enforcement actions involving hundreds of thousands of aliens who may be or are in violation of U.S. immigration laws. These actions include apprehension or arrest, detention, return, and removal from the United States of aliens.<sup>1</sup> Over 440,557 people have been detained, Figure 1.5 shows the total number of people in detention centers, between 2005 and 2013 has doubled. The increase of those detained includes permanent residents, U.S. citizens, asylum seekers, and refugees as well as, mixing violent criminals with those with no criminal history. The increase in number is partially due to the “Detention Bed Mandate” or “Bed Quota,” policy which was established in 2009. According to the National Immigrant Justice Center, the immigration detention bed quota refers to language in congressional appropriations law that requires U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to maintain

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<sup>1</sup> Simanski and Sapp, “Immigration Enforcement Actions: 2012 [Annual Report].”

34,000 immigration detention beds on a daily basis.<sup>2</sup> The budget for custody operations allows the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to insure 34,000 beds be available each night; however, not necessarily fill them.

Figure 1.5



### What is Mandatory Detention?

Mandatory Detention was first enacted into law in 1988. Since then Congress has passed two laws, the Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) and Illegal Immigration and Immigrant responsibility Act (IIRIRA). These laws expanded the category related to who is subjected to mandatory detention. Mandatory detention is the practice of imprisoning an individual without any consideration of whether incarceration is necessary or appropriate. Current U.S. immigration policies require whole categories of non-citizens to be imprisoned without any individual assessment of their risk to public safety, flight risk, or of their vulnerability to

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<sup>2</sup> "Detention Bed Quota | National Immigrant Justice Center."

detention while the government tries to prove that it has the authority to deport them.<sup>3</sup>

Anyone can be placed in mandatory detention, both legal and non-legal residents.

This includes people who are violent criminals and people with no criminal history, as well as refugees and those seeking asylum; many are detained anywhere from months up to several years.

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<sup>3</sup> Obama, "Facts about Mandatory Detention Facts."

## Chapter 2: INSIDE DETENTION CENTERS

A glimpse into the living conditions

Conditions of immigration detention centers are poor and inadequate. The use of these centers is deplorable nearly all with prison-like conditions. Ever since the enactment of the “bed quota,” the use of these prison-like facilities has increased; causing many to become overrun and overcrowded. Conditions of detention frequently violate fundamental human rights. Immigration detainees are often detained in jail-like facilities with barbed wire and cells, alongside those serving time for criminal convictions. They are not able to wear their own clothes but instead wear prison uniforms and are often handcuffed.<sup>4</sup>

Detainees are classified into three different categories based on their criminal background. These levels are color coded and range from Level One—low threat—to Level three—highest threat.

- Highest threat - Level 3 - Dark red
- Medium threat - Level 2 - Bright orange
- Lowest threat - Level 1 - Dark blue

Level three is categorized as dark red and houses high risk detainees that require maximum security. Level two is medium risk and categorized as bright orange; they have two or more arrests in a five year period for assault where force was used against another person with the intent to commit bodily injury.<sup>5</sup> Level one is low risk and categorized as dark blue; they include minor criminal records and nonviolent

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<sup>4</sup> Amnesty International, “Jailed Without Justice.”

<sup>5</sup> Facilities et al., “Ins Detention Standard.”

felonies.<sup>6</sup> During the processing stage, an assessment form is filled to classify detainees into categories. Initial security questions range from type of crime, criminal and escape history, questions for level 3 classification range from prior convictions, violation history and history of assault. Each question is based on a number scale system that is used to total points for custody classification. All questions are based on a list of “Severity of Offense Scale”, shown in figure 2.1 that contains types of crimes committed by detainees.

Figure 2.1

U. S. IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE Detainee Classification System	
SEVERITY OF OFFENSE SCALE	
<b>HIGHEST:</b> Aiding Escape Aggravated Battery with Deadly Weapon Armed Robbery (Multiple with injury) Burglary with Assault Escape (Secure Facility) Inciting Riot Kidnapping Murder (1st, 2nd degree) Sexual Battery (with violence upon a minor)	Grand Theft Manslaughter Sale, Delivery, Possession of Controlled Substance Tampering with Witness Worthless Checks (felony) Welfare Fraud (felony) Escape (Non-secure Facility)
<b>HIGH:</b> Aggravated Assault Aggravated Battery Aggravated Child Abuse Arson Battery Law Enforcement Officer Burglary (Armed) Extortion False Imprisonment False Report of Bombings Controlled Substances (Importation, Trafficking) Introduction of Contraband into Detention Facility Manufacture of Explosives Robbery (armed, strong armed) Sexual Battery (other than capital or life felony)	<b>LOW:</b> Driving under the Influence Leaving the scene of Accident Battery (Simple Assault) Carrying Concealed Weapon (other than firearm) Disorderly Conduct Gambling Offering to Commit Prostitution Possession Marijuana (misdemeanor) Possession Drug Paraphernalia Petit Theft Trespass Worthless Check (misdemeanor)
<b>MODERATE:</b> Armed Trespass Burglary Carrying Concealed Firearm Forgery	
<i>Detainee Classification System</i>	<i>February 11, 2002</i>

<sup>6</sup> Standard, “Ins D Etention Standard.”

Detainees are categorized as level one due to crimes listed as low threat such as “trespass, gambling, driving under the influence”; while other level one classifications include people who overstay their visas, women and children who are fleeing domestic abuse or violent gangs, or those who were unable to present proper paperwork at the time of detainment. Less than one in nine (10.8%) detainees met ICE’s stated goal of pursuing individuals who pose a serious threat to public safety or national security, while 62% of individuals had no criminal convictions or only minor offenses, such as traffic infractions.<sup>7</sup> Although most detainee offenses are of low level classification they are still arrested, detained and placed in detention facilities.

### *Design Conditions*

There are two types of detention centers. Individuals are confined in single cell prison-like environments. Families are confined in large warehouse type facilities subdivided into areas by chain like fences. Others are placed in prisons, sharing spaces with convicted felons. Detention centers are designed like prisons, according to ICE’s design handbook for detention centers, cell design standards include:

- Hold rooms will be situated in a location within a secure perimeter.
- Hold rooms shall contain a minimum of 37 square feet. 7 feet for the detainee, 5 square feet for lavatory/toilet fixture, and 25 square feet for wheelchair turnaround.
- All hold rooms shall be equipped with stainless steel, combination lavatory/toilet.

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<sup>7</sup> “Immigration Detainers | National Immigrant Justice Center.”

- Hold room walls shall be escape and tamperproof, e.g., 8-inch, reinforced concrete masonry unit wall. Impact-resistant, steel-studded surfaces will also meet this standard, especially in existing buildings that cannot support reinforced concrete. The walls shall extend and be tied into the floor/room structure above. Ceilings shall also be escape- and tamperproof, preferably 10-16' high but no less than nine feet, except in currently existing facilities with lower floor-to-floor heights.
- Each hold room shall have two-inch thick, detention-grade, 14-gauge steel doors that swing outward.
- The solid doors shall be equipped with security-glass or barred windows, 12"x12", installed at eye level for convenient visual checks. Security bars or mesh doors will be of appropriately sturdy construction to prevent escape.<sup>8</sup>

Masonry walls, barred windows, steel doors, and small cells make up the architectural vernacular of these centers. They are designed as maximum security prisons, although most detainees are of low level threat. Below in figure 2.1 shows a comparison between a standard prison cell and a detention cell. Detention cells are small compared to a standard prison cell. A standard prison cell is much larger than a standard detention cell, at 48 square feet for a standard prison cell vs. 37 square feet for a detention cell. Space in detention cells includes 7 square feet for a [person], five square for a combination lavatory/toilet fixture, and 25 square feet for wheelchair turnaround). These cells are designed for high max security criminals, however low

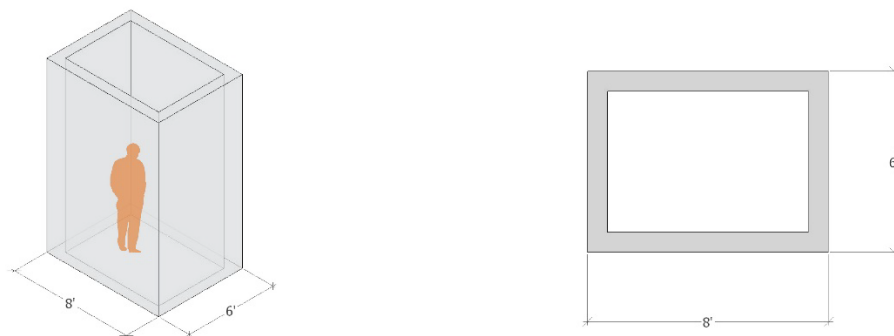
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<sup>8</sup> Facilities et al., "Ins Detention Standard."

level detainees are not of high level threat and should not be placed in such conditions or alongside high security max criminals. Being an undocumented detainee in these centers is a civil matter and not criminal, therefore the detainee should be treated as such.

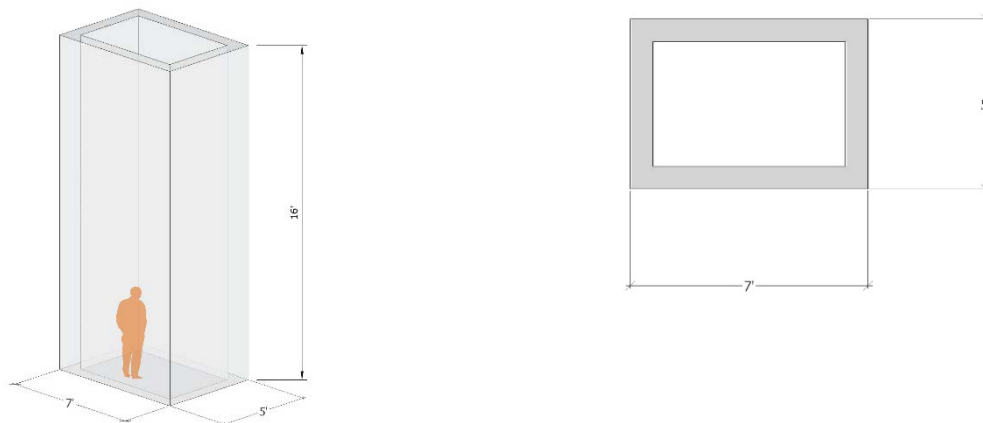
Figure 2.2

Standard prison cell:



*Image by Author.*

Standard detention cell:



*Image by Author.*



Often times the conditions in these rooms are windowless and lack heating. In overcrowded facilities, several people are placed in these cells to share. Figure 2.3 depicts a cell with several bunk beds in one room. Children are also victimized by these circumstances, many are relocated to family detention centers, these are large warehouses with cells made of chain link fences. Children are placed within these cells with little to no access to the outdoors. Figure 2.4 shows a migrant child being entertained by a TV within a warehouse while a guard stands by.

Figure 2.3



© 2017 - Center for American Progress| AP/Juan Carlos Llorca

Figure 2.4



Capitol Hill Publishing Corp., a Subsidiary of News Communications, Inc.

After a visit to a detention center in Dilley, Texas “lawmakers...said the “jail-like” conditions pose psychological and other health risks for the thousands of women and children being held for processing,”<sup>9</sup>. Many have fled from domestic abuse and violence, and combined with the traumatic experience suffered in their country of origin suffer further psychological distress. In a study done by Physicians for Human Rights and the Bellevue/ NYC Program for Survivors of Torture, rates of anxiety, depression and PTSD symptoms were extremely high among detained asylum seekers

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<sup>9</sup>Lillis, “Dems Push to Close Immigrant Detention Centers | TheHill.”

[and detainees in general]...Doctors documented that these levels of psychological distress worsened as the length of detention increased...[being placed in detention] centers adds to the physiological trauma they escaped.<sup>10</sup> Poor living conditions and prison environments are enough to cause trauma to anyone placed in these centers. It is documented that ICE detained at least 1,366 immigrant children in adult detention facilities throughout the United States. DHS detained these children for periods ranging from three days to more than one year, and nearly 1,000 children spent at least one week in adult facilities. It is important to note adult detention is inappropriate for children.<sup>11</sup> No one especially children should be subjected to these environments.

### *Centers in Maryland*

In the state of Maryland there are three immigration detention centers located in Snow Hill, Frederick, and Jessup. These centers house level one to level three detainees and place migrants alongside felons.

#### **Worcester County Detention Center:**

**Location:** 5022 Joyner Road Snow Hill, MD 21863

**Classification Type:** Medium Security Prison and Immigration Detention Center

**Site Context:** Rural, adjacent to Worcester County Recreation Center, John Walter Smith Memorial Park, and forest edge, and Worcester highway.

**Structure:** Brick/Concrete structure

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<sup>10</sup> “Immigration Detainers | National Immigrant Justice Center.”

<sup>11</sup> Sheet et al., “Flores v. Reno 2.”

Figure 2.5

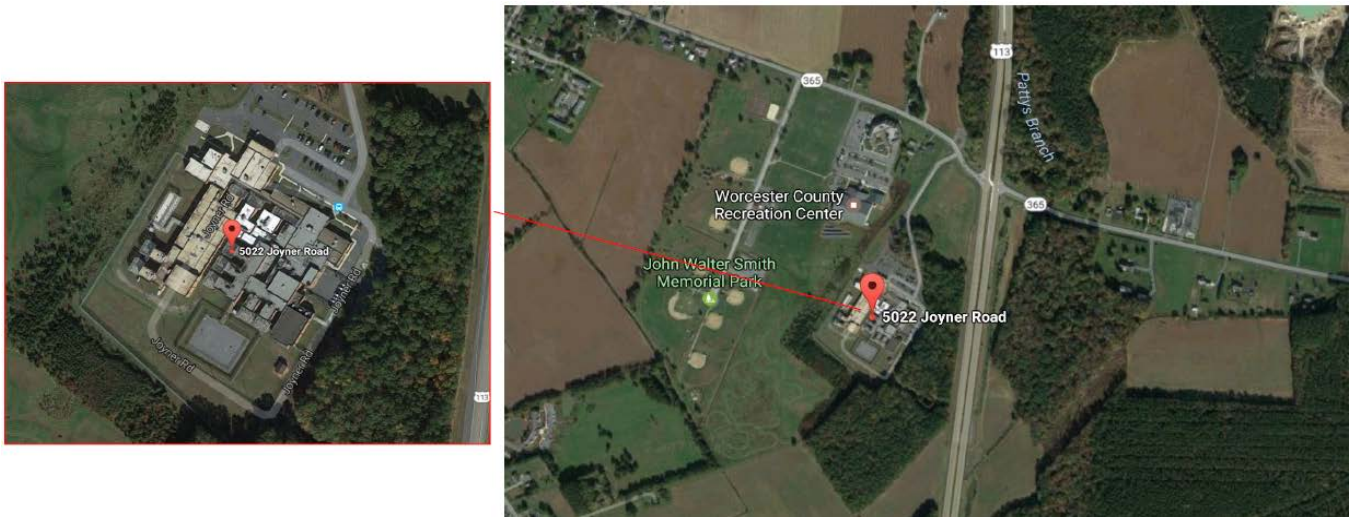


Figure 2.6



Front entrance view of Worcester County Detention Center. Image: Google street View

**Frederick County Detention Center:**

**Location:** 7300 Marcies Choice Lane Frederick, MD 21704

**Classification type:** Low and medium level with restricted housing unit for detainees

**Site Context:** Work Release, Detention Center, District Court Commissioners, Water and Sewer Maintenance, Ballenger-McKinney Wastewater Treatment Plant.

**Structure:** Brick, concrete



Figure 2.7

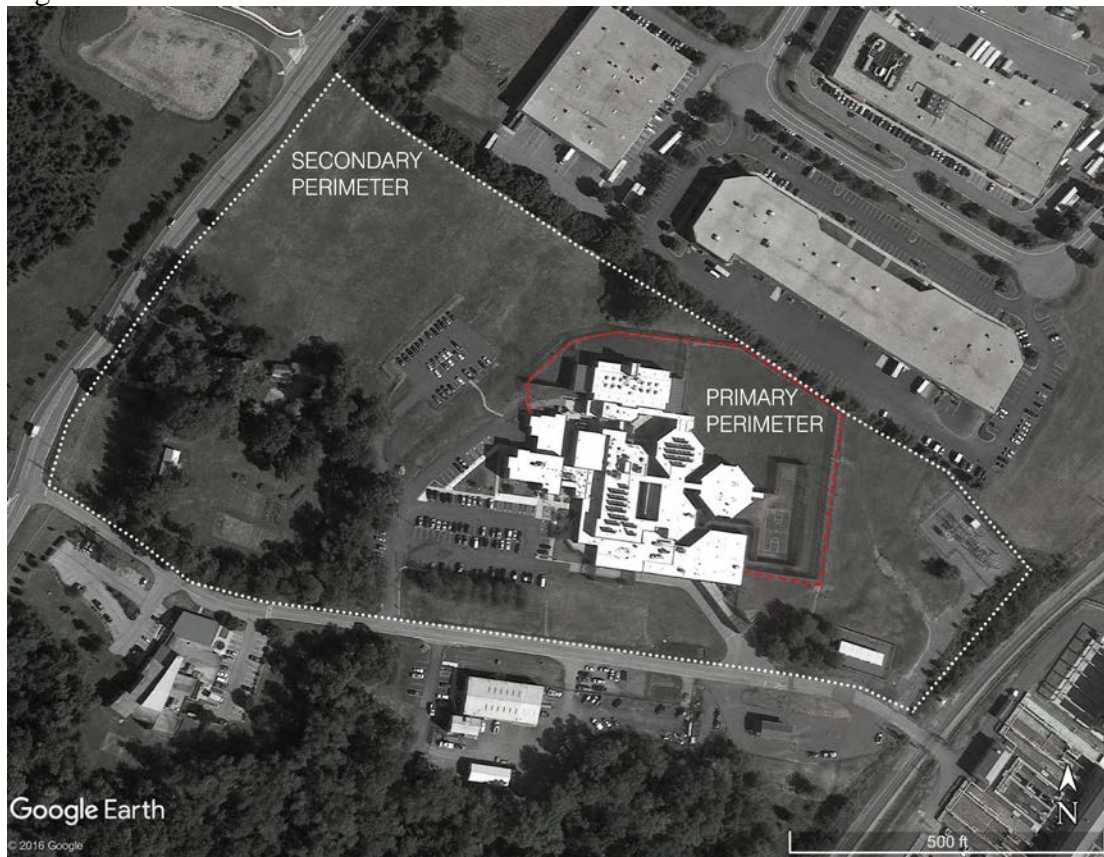


Figure 2.8



View of front entrance. Image credit: Google street view

Figure 2.9



**Secondary perimeter vs. Primary perimeter**

Figure 2.10



**Public outdoor space vs. Private outdoor space**

**Howard County Detention Center:**

**Location:** 7301 Waterloo Rd Jessup, MD 20794

**Classification type:** Medium high/ High Level and low/ medium low level with restricted housing units

**Site Context:** Forest edge, retail, Police station

**Structure:** Concrete



Figure 2.11

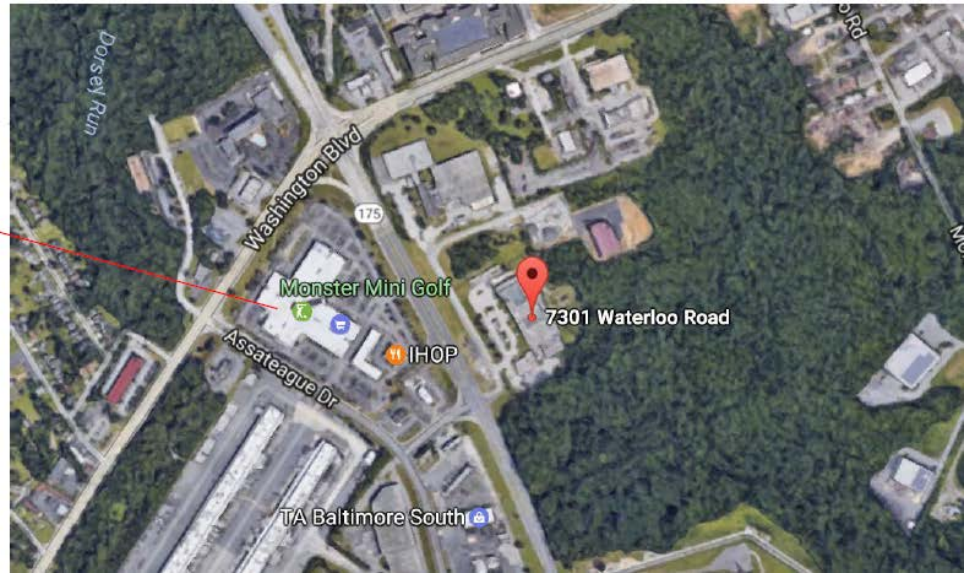


Figure 2.12



View from Street. Image credit: Google street view.

Figure 2.13



**Primary perimeter vs. Secondary perimeter**

Figure 2.14



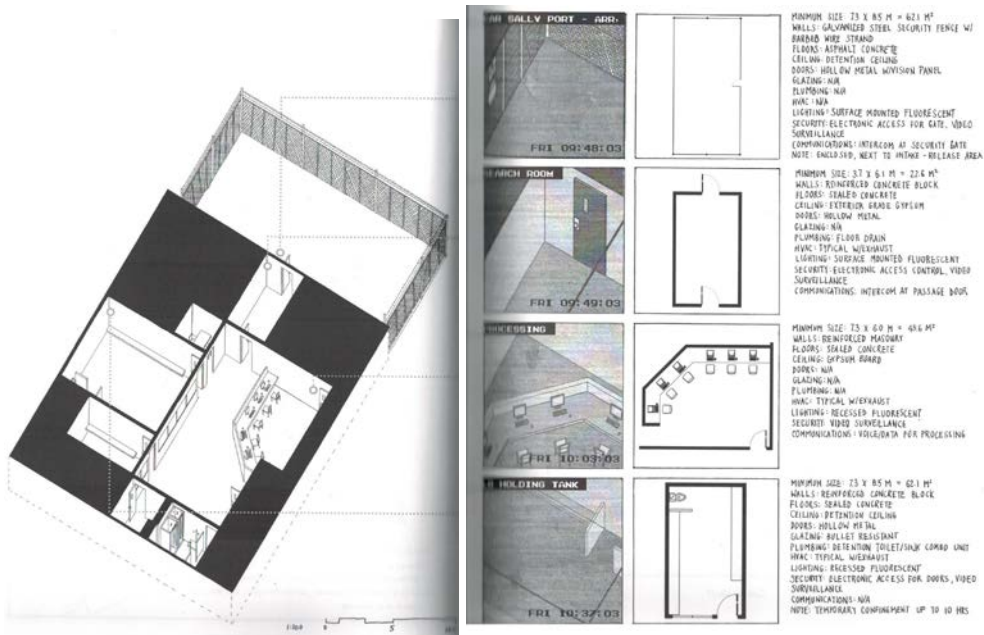


## **Private outdoor space vs. Public outdoor space**

The centers in Maryland are setup like most centers in the U.S.; immigration detainees and convicted felons are grouped into one facility and at times share the same cell. At the Frederick County Detention Center low level detainees are held in separate units, however at the Howard County Detention Center and Worcester County Detention Center both high, medium and low level detainees are grouped together alongside convicted felons.

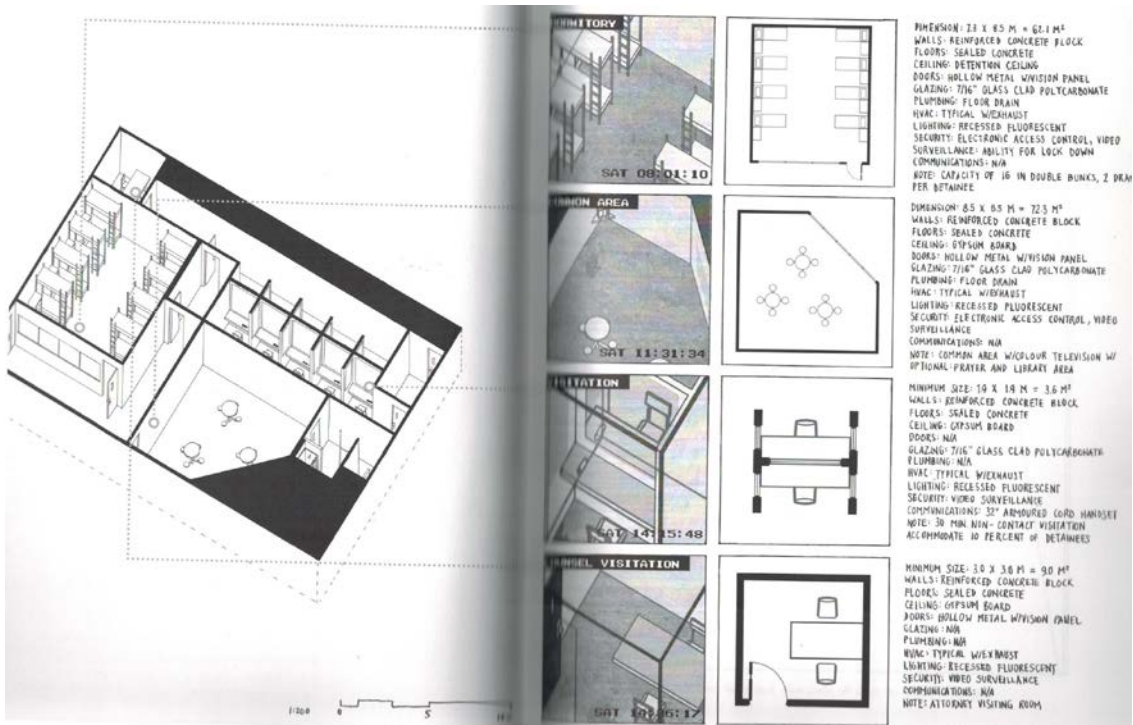
Finding images of these centers is nearly impossible, similar to the undocumented migrants held at these facilities the detention centers are also undocumented and hidden. Activist Tings Chak, created a series of images from her visits into detention centers in Canada. Her book “Undocumented: The Architecture of Migrant Detention,” showcases hand drawings of images from inside detention centers. It provides a view into the hidden world of detention centers. Below are a few images from her book depicting what the inside of these centers look like.

Figure 2.15



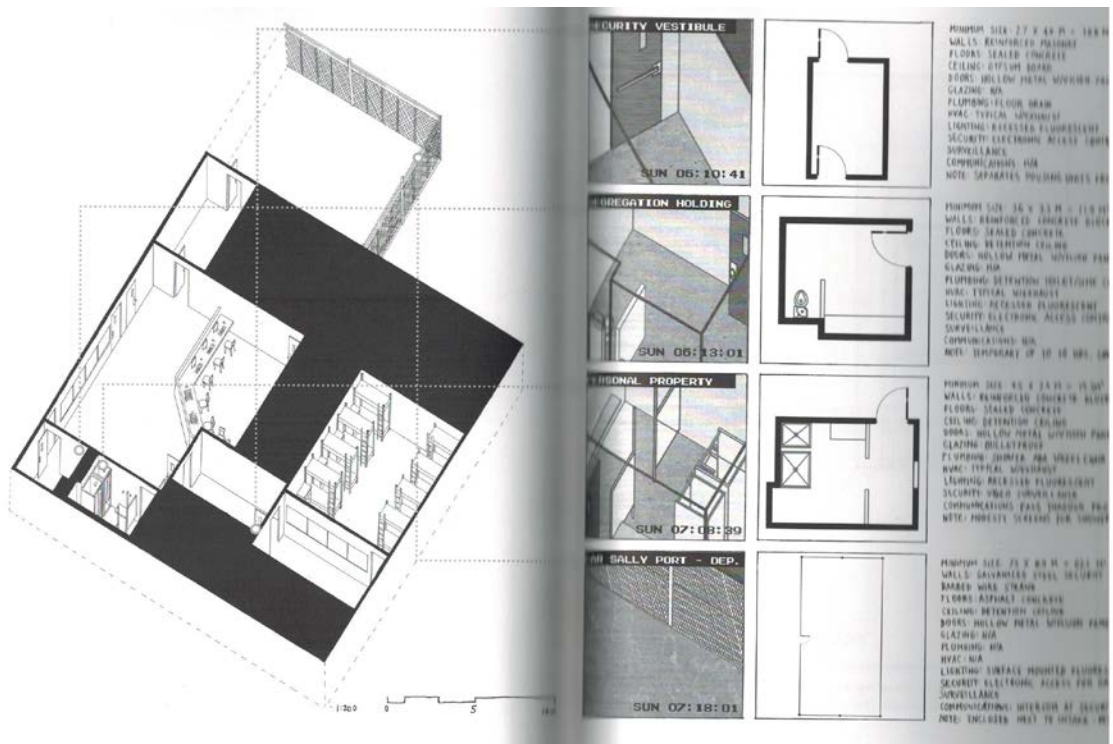
First space that a migrant is placed in to be assessed.

Figure 2.16



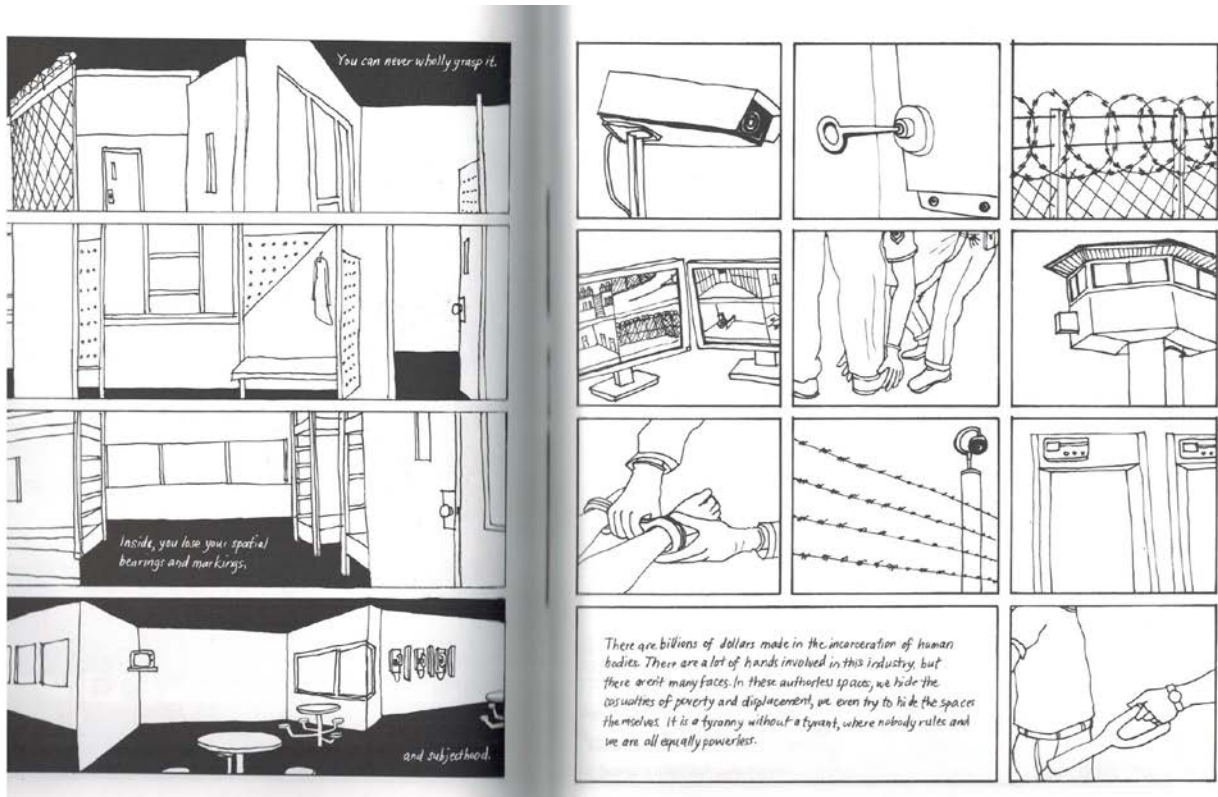
Living zone

Figure 2.17



Outtake, space where migrants are placed when waiting to be released from center.

Figure 2.18



### Snapshots of everyday living

Dressed in prison garb and placed into a correctional facility and treated as a criminal, migrants are made to feel alone, guilty, and afraid. As architects and architecture students, how can we help? What can we do to better design and improve conditions? What is our responsibility as designers? Below is an interview by artist Nir Evron, he poses as a migrant interviewing an architect; asking why as designers we allow the construction and designs of these facilities?

PLAYING A ROLE: WAREHOUSING AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS IN ISRAEL

An interview by Nir Evron

**Can we start?**

*"Let's start"*

**"How do you sleep at night?"**

**You lean back and answer,** *"I sleep well, my conscience is quiet"*

**I ask: "How do they teach an architect in five years to plan airports, hospitals, public buildings, private homes?"**

**You answer:** *"they teach you how to think, to research, and to plan. You put together a qualified team and go out to the job."*

**You continue,**

*"In this profession a lot of the same elements appear again and again. These bore me, for the most part. The challenge is to balance the client's demands with regulations and budgetary constraints."*

**I ask: "What do we see in the plans we're looking at now?"**

**You point.**

*"In the drawings I organize all of the functions the client wants so as to minimize the things we don't want to see. I always say: "there's no ideal, only the optimal. I do the best possible job within the constraints."*

**I ask about the architect's role in shaping society.**

**You get up and answer:**

*"Architects generally have a big ego, they think they're walking three feet above ground. But a good architect has to be part of an orchestra, in which everyone has a part that he needs to play. You have to be modest, and not to be concerned with ideals or building a great monument to yourself."*

**You add:**

*"Look, they come to me because they know I can turn X into Y in the shortest time possible."*

*"That's the architect's job."*

**Finally, I mention the thorny connection between architecture, politics, and private capital.**

**You respond:**

*"An architect doesn't have to examine every policy of an elected government."*

*"The government has policies, and these are manifested also in projects that need to be built. That's where I come in."*

*Architecture was always connected to big money and political power, but you shouldn't think about that too much."*

*"Listen, if you chose to do art, do art, leave politics to the politicians." <sup>12</sup>*

Designers play a critical role on the environmental experience within buildings. Therefore, as architects and students of architecture it is our social responsibility to oversee what and how we design.

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<sup>12</sup> Evron, "Warehousing African Migrants in Israel | Creative Time Reports."

## Chapter 3: Precedents

### Case Study 1: Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton, VA

Former prison transformed into Arts Center

Workhouse Arts Center first opened in 1910 to house prisoners. It was designed as a work and rehabilitation facility for short term inmates. The concept was to place prisoners in an open air environment as a way to “rehabilitate and reform prisoners through fresh air, good food and honest work.”<sup>13</sup> Set on 3,200 acres of farmland, inmates were made to care for the farm. The notion was that there would be no prison cells instead prisoners would be placed in an open air environment and housed in dorms. Designed by architect Snowden Ashford, the brick buildings is of Colonial Revival style, to “portray the Progressive-Era ideals of the integration of work, home, education, recreation, health and religion.”<sup>14</sup> By the 1980’s it would no longer resemble a rehabilitation facility, lack of funding left it overcrowded and in disrepair. By 2001, it was no longer a correctional facility; however, by 2002 the Lorton Arts Foundation proposed to transform the former prison into an arts center. In 2008 it opened up to the public, it includes six artist studio buildings, galleries, theatre and an art school. It provides a space for artist and emerging artist to showcase their work while providing studio space. This is a good example of how a prison can be transformed into a facility that is beneficial to a community and artists. The

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<sup>13</sup> “History | Workhouse Prison Museum.”

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.



concept of a prison as a rehabilitation facility places inmates in an open air environment is not a foreign or new concept.

Figure 3.1



Images credit: Abby Winters  
Right: Green promenade Left: Former prison now artist studio.

Figure 3.2



Image Credit: Studio39

Figure 3.3



Aerial View. Image: Studio39 drawing overlaid on google map.

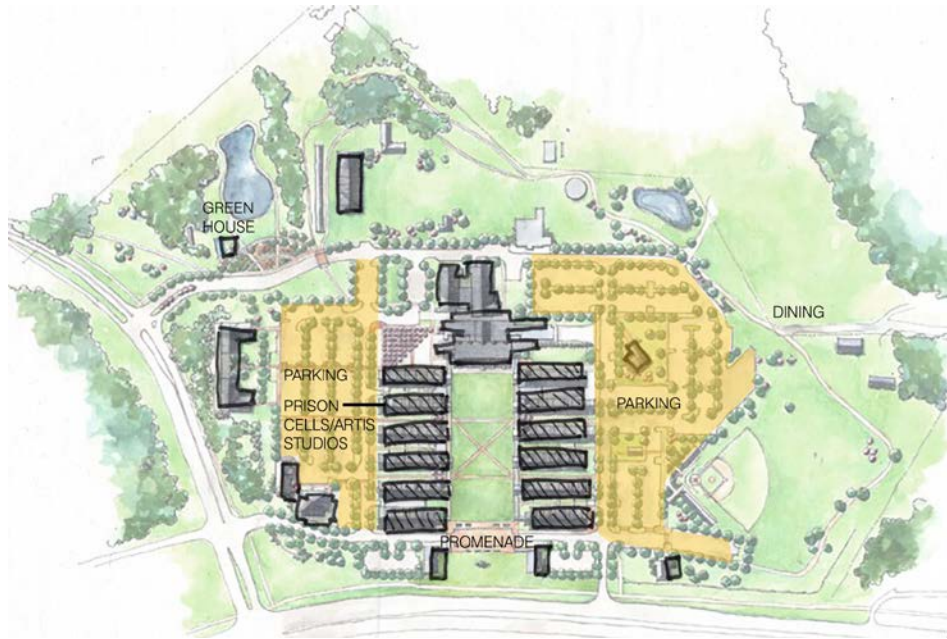
Figure 3.4



Paths. Diagram overlaid on Studio39 drawing.



Figure 3.5



Buildings and parking. Diagram overlaid on Studio39 drawing.

### Case Study 2: De Koepel Prison, Haarlem, Netherlands

Empty prisons as homes for Refugees

The Netherlands has the lowest percentage of prisoners than any other country. Due to the shortage of prison inmates, prisons remain empty. About a third of Dutch prison cells sit empty, according to the Ministry of Justice. Criminologists attribute the situation to a spectacular fall in crime over the past two decades and an approach to law enforcement that prefers rehabilitation to incarceration.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Bilefsky, "Dutch Get Creative to Solve a Prison Problem: Too Many Empty Cells - The New York Times."

With the influx of migrants from the Middle East, a shortage of housing became a problem. The Dutch government came up with new ways to put these prisons to good use. They started housing refugees in empty prisons as a temporary home while they wait to be processed. Most of the prisons have been transformed to look less like prisons; however, at certain prisons such as De Koepel which is a considered a monument they were unable to renovate. Although it still has the appearance of a prison, refugees are able walk around freely without being placed in locked cells. Doors were modified to be opened from inside cells and barbed wires were removed. Many are able to leave the buildings and grounds as well given permission to spend nights away.

Figure 3.6



Image credit: Google aerial.



Figure 3.7



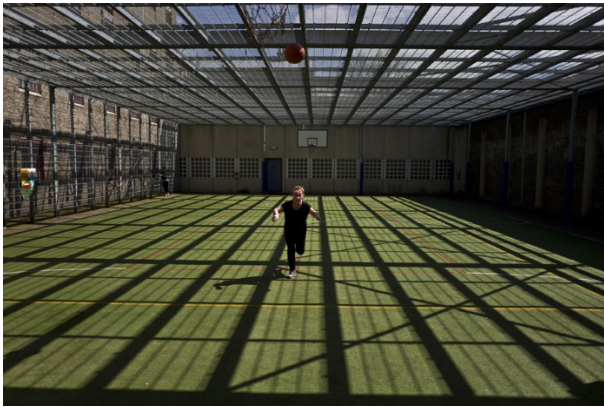
Primary perimeter vs. secondary perimeter

Figure 3.8



Access to outdoor space inside and outside the building. Refugees are free to leave the complex during the day and can spend nights away.

Figure 3.9



A Mongolian migrant Naaran Baatar, 40, plays basketball in a yard of the former prison of De Koepel. Image: Associated Press photographer Muhammed Muheisen

Figure 3.10



A migrant sits outside her room while another runs in the corridor of the women section of the former prison of De Koepel. Image: Associated Press photographer Muhammed Muheisen

### Case Study 3: Bastoy Prison, Bastoy Island, Norway

#### Rehabilitation instead of prison cells

Norway has one of the lowest numbers of criminals that relapse once released. The approach of rehabilitation rather than imprisonment has prevented many from committing crimes. When criminals in Norway leave prison, they stay out. It has one of the lowest recidivism rates in the world at 20%. On the other hand the U.S. has one of the highest: 76.6% of prisoners are re-arrested within five years.<sup>16</sup> The concept of “restorative justice” which emphasizes repairing the harm caused by criminal behavior is implemented into Norway’s justice system. The system allows prisoners freedom and normalcy that regular prisons do not provide. Windows and doors do not have bars and has programs that prepare inmates for life after once released. One of the most well-known prisons in Norway is Bastoy Prison.

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<sup>16</sup> Sterbenz, “Why Norway’s Prison System Is so Successful - Business Insider.”

Bastoy Prison is located a mile off the coast of Norway and houses Norway's most dangerous criminals. However, barbed wires, fences, walls, bars, guard dogs are nowhere to be seen. This is because Bastoy Prison is one the world's most liberal prisons in the world. Following the philosophy of restorative justice, inmates live and work together as a community to care for the island, tending to the farm animals and farm land. There are 115 prisoners who live on the island and 69 prison employees on the island, at night only 5 guards stay on watch. The prison is equipped with communal houses and small private houses each with kitchens, living rooms, and private bedrooms. During downtime inmates can fish, ski, swim, play tennis, or go horseback riding.

The island functions as a small self-sustaining village, inmates farm, tend to the chickens, cattle and horses, chop wood for firewood, garden, and help in cooking dinner for other inmates. Other programs include education, where inmates learn to use computers to 3D model, counseling and other training programs that would help with finding a job once released. What stops many from escaping is the threat of being sent to a higher-security prison and have their sentences extended. The idea of giving inmates a second chance with rehabilitation is working and should be considered as model for other prisons.

Figure 3.11



Bastoy is located 1 mile from Norway's coast.

Figure 3.12





There are no walls or fences surrounding the island.

Figure 3.13



Farming at Bastøy Prison  
Image: Compelo.com

Figure 3.14



Inmate sunbathing outside his cottage.  
Image: Compelo.com

Figure 3.15



Image by Author

Figure 3.16



Image by Author

Figure 3.17



Image by Author



Figure 3.18



Image by Author

Researching these precedents has presented ideas and concepts that could be implemented as alternative housing for migrants. Unused prisons can be retrofitted and serve as housing units, allowing people to be free and not locked up behind bars.

The concept of “restorative justice” has proved that placing people in a nurturing environment reduces relapse, Bastøy Prison has proven that. De Koepel and other prisons being reused to house refugees, has given the opportunity for them to be free by reducing the fear and anxiety that being placed in detention center can bring.

Workhouse Prison, was built with the concept of work, home, recreation, education in an open air environment was more conducive to one’s health instead of being locked up.

## Chapter 4: Site Options

### Abandoned Schools

#### Forestville High School

Located at 7001 Beltz Drive, Forestville, MD, Forestville High School was formally a military academy for grades 9-12. Due to lack of enrollment, Prince George's County decided to permanently close the school. Today it sits vacant and unused, a proposal to reuse and adapt the existing structure to house migrants can prove useful. Existing infrastructure is already in place and can be transformed to accommodate housing. Workhouse Arts Center can be used as a precedent, adaptive reuse of a vacant school can make the school functional.

Why an empty school can be used as housing:

- Classrooms can be transformed as housing units
- Playgrounds for children are already on site
- Commercial kitchen
- Cafeteria
- Bathrooms
- Gym
- Electricity and power are already set up.

Reusing a school is a good option for alternative housing, it can contain family units as well as single units. Forestville High School, is located within a residential neighborhood making it a good place for migrants to integrate with the surrounding community. Workhouse Arts Center, a former prison is being used as

an arts center, it a good example of how former prison blocks were transformed into artist studios and galleries. The same can be done with abandoned schools throughout the country.

Diagrams:

Figure 4.1

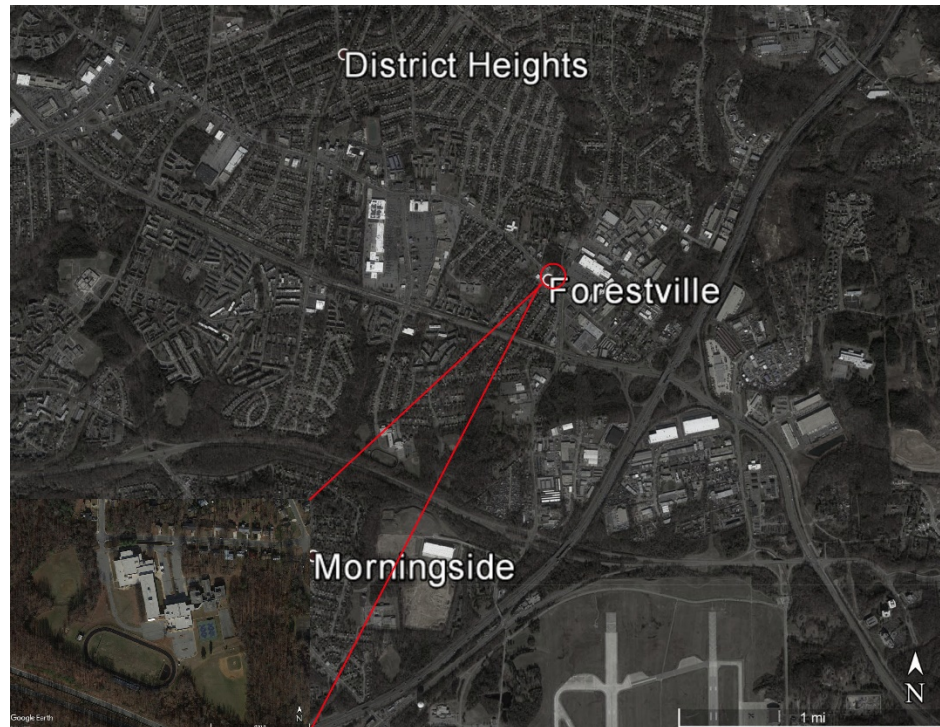


Image by Author

*Figure 4.2*



Image by Author

*Figure 4.3*

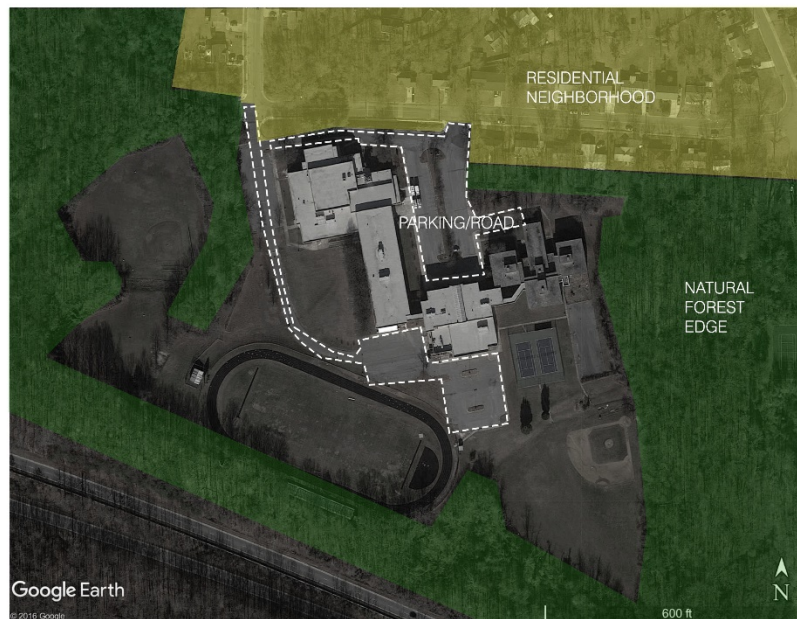


Image by Author



*Figure 4.4*



Image by Author

### *Existing detention centers*

Detention centers are not an ideal place to place people who are escaping violence; however, they can be restructured to better accommodate migrants. Adding an annex, retrofitting an existing center or demolishing an existing center and use the site are all options that can be considered. However, adding an annex next to a detention center is probably more feasible. Most centers place low level detainees alongside high level criminals, removing them and placing them in a less hostile place would benefit detainees. Adding an extension to

house families and low level detainees would provide a better environment. Looking at Worcester Detention Center as a possible site for an addition would work. It is located next to a recreational field, by adding an addition next to the field it would allow access to the outdoors and activity field. The addition can be set up as a school for migrants to be house and gain education while waiting to be processed. Programs such as English classes and training class can be beneficial for those once released.

Figure 4.5



Aerial of Worcester County Detention Center. Image by Author

Figure 4.6



Entrance sequence, perimeter, and private forest edge. Image by Author

Figure 4.7





Public outdoor space vs. Private Outdoor Space. Image by Author

Figure 4.8



Controlled outdoor space vs. confined outdoor space. Image by Author



Figure 4.9



Proposal 1 of addition placement, use of outdoor space. Image by Author

Figure 4.10



Proposal 2 of addition placement and access to green space. Image by Author

The existing facility of Worcester Detention center has access to greenspace and existing recreational facilities. Placing an annex adjacent to it allows access to outdoor space and privacy for families. Worcester can be demolished, retrofitted or an extension can be added, in this case an annex is considered to house low level risk migrants. Separating them from regular prisoners can ease the tension and fear of being in a prison. The annex would be designed to portray a friendlier environment where detainees can feel safe and more at ease while waiting to be processed.

## Poplar Island

### Background

Poplar Island is located in the Chesapeake Bay and less than 2 miles off the coast of Talbot County, MD. The island was first discovered in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and formally named Popeley's Island. It was once a thriving community with about 100 inhabitants. The island included a church, school, post office, sawmill and several farms throughout the island. By the 1920's, settlers began moving out and it became a hunting and fishing preserve. The island was once a little over 1,000 acres; over time it began to erode due to erosion. By the 1990's it was about five acres with only a few islets remaining scattered across the bay. In 1998, the Maryland Port Administration and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers came together to save the island.

A proposal to use dredge material from the Baltimore Harbor to restore the island and turn it into a habitat restoration project was introduced. The effective use of dredged material to restore lost habitat is beneficial to the wildlife and the bay, by providing a valuable habitat for birds, the Diamondback Terrapin, and marine life. Sediments from rivers that flow into the Chesapeake Bay contains fine silt that settles into the shipping channels. To keep the channels open and safe they must be dredged; however, finding a dumping ground for dredge material has become a challenge. A solution for a location for dredge material was to place it onto Poplar Island, using it as building material to restore the island. Figure 4.1 shows the location of Poplar Island at the state level and Figure 4.2 shows the area at a regional level.

Figure 4.11

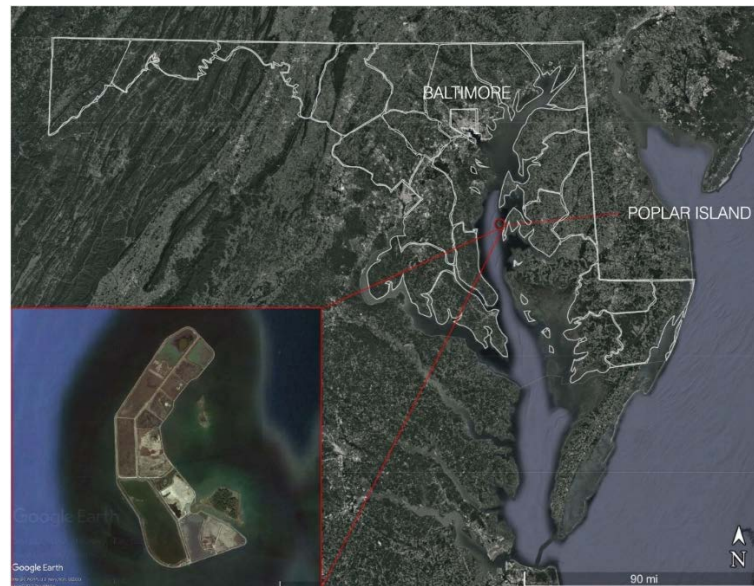


Image by Author

Figure 4.12

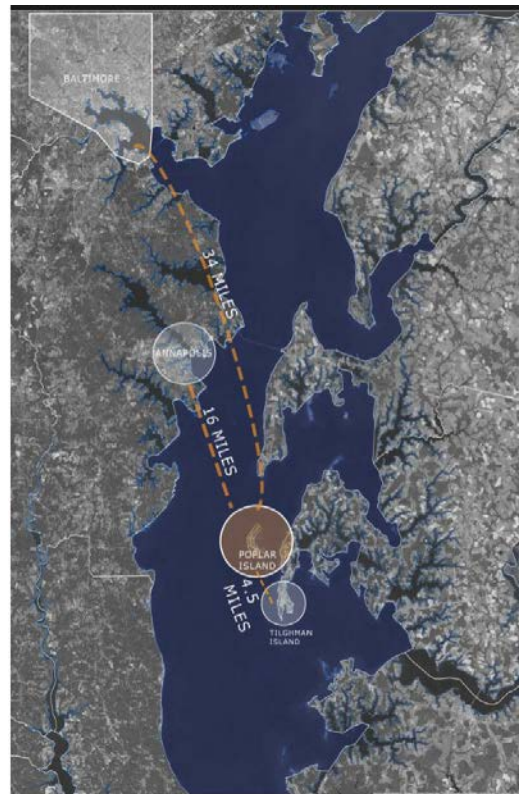


Image by Author

*Figure 4.13*



Image by Author

Analysis:

Currently the island encompasses 1,140 acres of wetland and upland habitat. The goal of the restoration project is to create 737 acres of wetland on the Eastern side of the island it will include low high marsh areas, habitat islands and open water pools. On the west side 840 acres of upland habitat which will include forest and meadows. When completed it will resemble the 1,847 footprint. It is located in Talbot County, Maryland about 1 mile off the coast. Two privately owned islands are adjacent to the east, Jefferson Island and Coaches Island. Natural oyster bars are located to the north, northwest, and east of Poplar Island. Figure 3.2 depicts Poplar Island as it was in 1847 and what was left of it in 1993. The image on the right shows what the final outcome will look like once all the cells are completed.



Figure 4.14

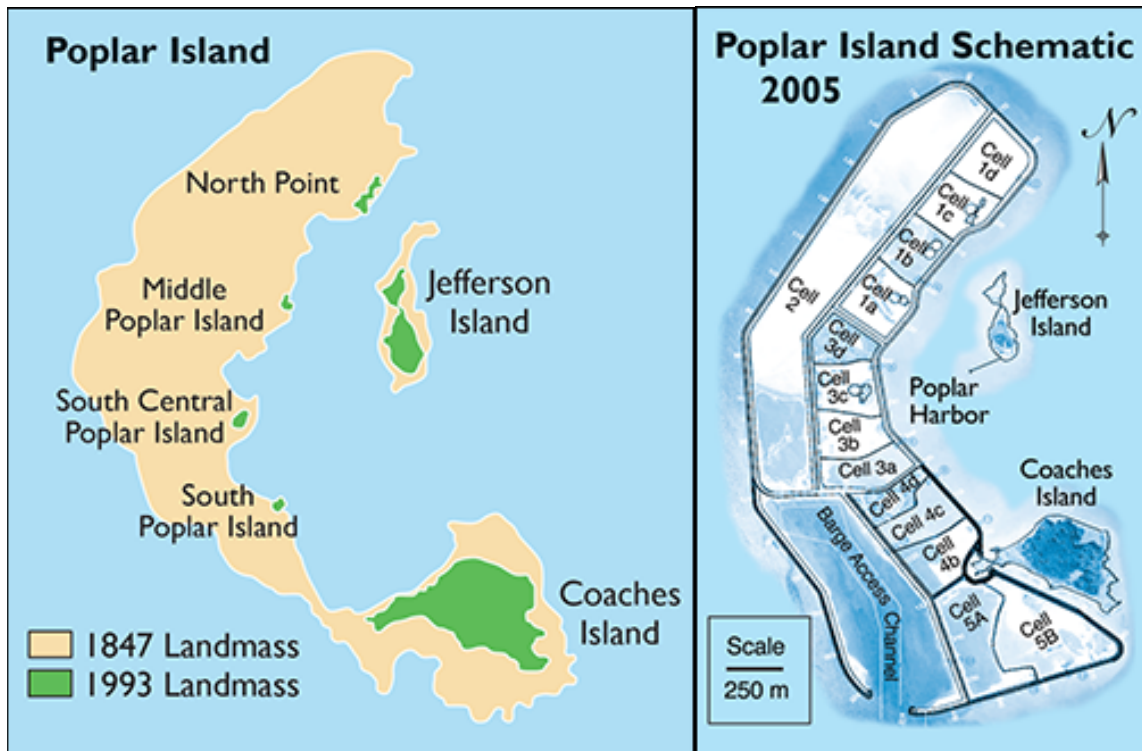


Image credit: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

It is ideal to rebuild Poplar Island as it would provide a home for a diverse habitat, by creating wetlands and uplands. The project is projected to take 28 years to complete. As construction gets underway, it is an opportunity for Poplar Island to have another function as a potential site to house and place migrant detainees. Using Bastoy Prison as a precedent, Poplar Island can be used to house and place detainees. Bastoy Prison used the concept of “restorative justice” to rehabilitate inmates. This same concepts can be used on migrants who have suffered trauma in their country of origin. Placing them in an open air environment would avoid placing them in prisons like detention centers. It will give them an opportunity to have a community and a sense of normalcy. Following in the footsteps of Bastoy Prison, no fences, walls or

barbed wires would be placed around the island, migrants would be able to roam freely without fear. Many suffer from mental health issues and being in an open air environment would help many rehabilitate. Similar to Bastoy, Poplar Island could be made into a self-sustaining village. Implementing solar power, agriculture, and actual residences could change the way detention centers are viewed and used. Providing farmland for agriculture, cattle, chickens, and pigs would enable migrants to sustain themselves. Proposing a bridge to the mainland would enable migrants to leave the island for provisions.

#### Programs:

Programs to consider for a self-sustaining island would include solar power, farms, and sleeping units. The largest population in detention center are of Latino background, to accommodate this population identity and culture should be taken into account.

#### Programs would include:

- A church/chapel that will include a space for mass, baptisms, space to celebrate religious holidays
- Celebration space for life events such as quinceaneras birthdays and mother's day. Educational and training programs such as a Mental Health Facility, many suffer from PTSD.
- A library would provide access to law books and children books, classes can provide an opportunity for educational programs for children, reading and writing classes for adults, English classes, and "Life connection" classes to



help migrants who are allowed to stay and refugees integrate and transition into society once released.

- Workshops would include, arts/crafts center, woodshop, mechanical shop, and business workshops.
- Specific programs designed to help migrants integrate with communities outside the island can be beneficial to the overall success of Poplar Island.
- Agriculture classes and programs would help sustain the island. Farming would allow migrants to plant and grow their own food, care for the local farm animals and fish.
- Other buildings proposed would be a post office and general store (Bodega) where essentials would be provided.

The benefits of having migrants live on Poplar Island is the relationship between nature and man. Poplar Island is programed to be an ecological laboratory, migrants could help in the success of the ecology of the island. Care and of the ecology of the island can be done by migrants and they can serve as educators to the public on the importance of the wellbeing of the island. Majority of these programs can be used and implemented on different sites it is not specific to Poplar Island.

### Farming

Farming is one of the most crucial programs that would determine the success of Poplar Island as a home for migrants. It takes 1 acre to feed one person per year, the amount of food produced is contingent on the diet of the people living in the area. According to the chart below, a family of four can live off 2 acres of land. This

Figure 4.15



To figure out how much people can the island sustain the diet of the population will be considered to decide what type of food is best suited. On Poplar Island there is a total of 1,715 acres available, in Howard County Detention center detains 98 people per day, in Frederick County Detention Center 62 people are detained per day for a total of 160 people detained in Maryland per day and upwards to a 1,000 people per year.

Figure 4.16

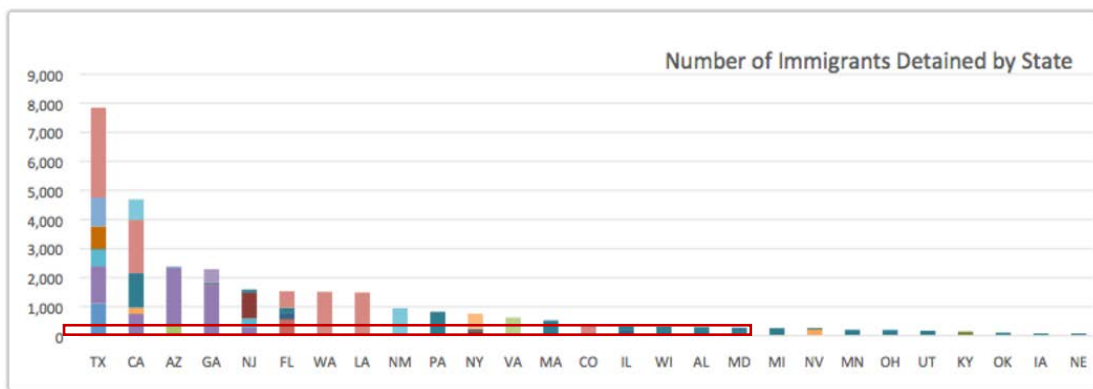


Chart: endisolation.org

Poplar Island can sustain about 600 people with 300 acres of farm land for 2 acres for every 4 people. It can be an ideal location for migrants to live.

Figure 4.17



Image by Author

Figure 4.18



Image by Author

Figure 4.19



Above is a proposal for site layout for the potential use of Poplar Island. Keeping in line with the current masterplan, residential, agriculture, and institutional zones are implemented. A proposed bridge to connect the island to mainland to minimize isolation and travel time.

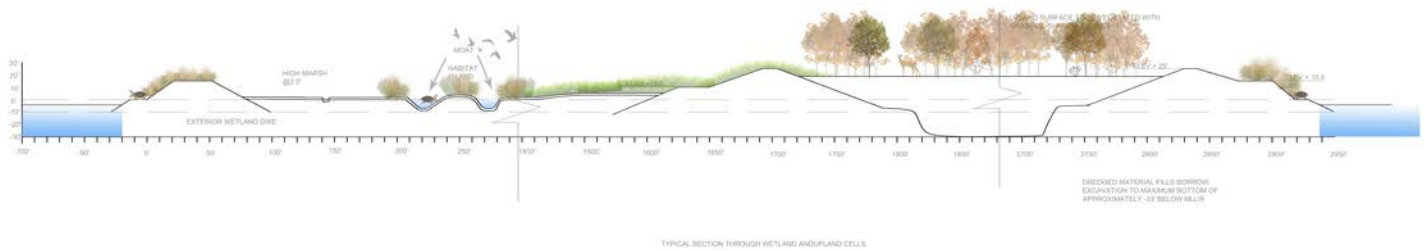
*Figure 4.20*



Image by Author

Proposal 2 for site layout. Trees are placed on the northwest part of the island to reduce wind, institutional buildings are centralized with residential buildings on each side. Figure 4.8 is a cross section of the site from east to west, it shows the existing marshland and future buildup of the forest edge on the west side. The edges are buffered by armored walls, with opening for diamond back turtles to nest, each cell contain small habitat island for birds to nest.

*Figure 4.21*



### *Site Conclusion*

There are many alternatives to migrant housing proving that detention centers can be replaced. This research has shown that prisons can be repurposed, vacant schools can serve different functions and rebuilt islands can be beneficial to the environment. With this in mind, Poplar Island is the best choice for site selection. The current masterplan calls for expansion towards the north end and becoming a public recreational area. The vast amount of space provides room for future expansion, opportunity for ecological research and ultimately a place for human sanctuary.



## Chapter 5: Design Process/Strategies

### Site Selection

#### Site Analysis

Ultimately Poplar Island was chosen as the site for redevelopment for a proposal for a community of detainees. Of the 1,800 acres available, 27 acres was developed. This particular area was chosen for its close proximity to the existing boat access channel. It also created the opportunity to add barrier islands to the east to provide flood mitigation and ease the force of tidal waves entering the harbor.

*Figure 5.1*



Image by Author

*Figure 5.2*



Site location relative to existing dock, masterplan overlaid on google map. Image by Author

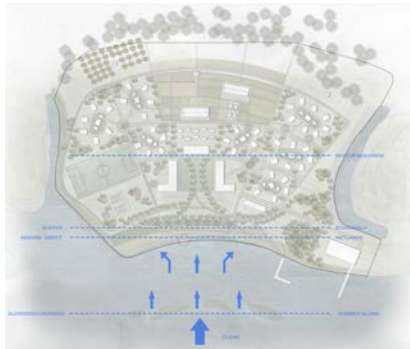
*Figure 5.3*



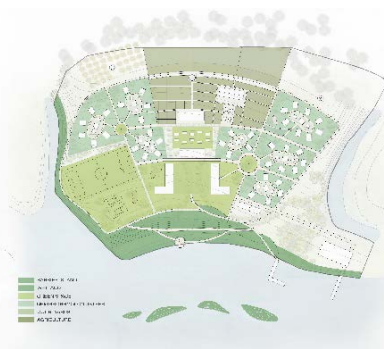
Master plan of community. Image by Author

The main mode of transportation is by boat, migrants would depart from the existing dock on the mainland. They will then make their way towards Poplar Island, around a cluster of barrier islands that protect the entry from flooding and tidal waves (Figure 5.4). Figure 5.4,5,6 depicts the site concept of flood mitigation, greenspaces, and program.

*Figure 5.4*



*Figure 5.5*



*Figure 5.6*



Barrier islands provide buffer from storm surge, by slowing and dispersing waves. The constructed wetlands and boardwalk area provides the next layer of protection that absorbs and redirects waves, while the upper terraces provide further buffer zone as shown in figure 5.4. Green spaces is a critical addition to the masterplan, recreational areas, agriculture fields and courtyards within neighborhoods is essential to providing a community atmosphere and places for social engagement.

## Chapter 6: Unlocking Human Dignity

### Design Proposal

#### A Place to Heal

Following Bastoy Prison, Norway, the premise of this thesis is to create a community for migrants using restorative justice for low risk migrants. As mentioned before, many migrants were forced to leave their country of origin and suffer emotional trauma. Poplar Island would serve as a place for healing for those residing on the island.

Upon arrival at the dock, residents would be welcomed and would journey up a meandering path of healing where they would get a glimpse of the cottages through the allee of trees (Figure 6.1).

*Figure 6.1*



View of community from boat and arrival dock. Image by Author



*Figure 6.2*



View of Boardwalk and Path of healing. Image by Author

The journey towards healing gives an opportunity to feel more welcomed, allowing views towards the barrier/habitat islands as well as the terraced wetlands area and access for recreation. Below is a cross section the arrival sequence and view to living quarters and bodega (general store).

*Figure 6.3*



*Section through residential neighborhood and view of arrival dock. Image by Author.*

Once reaching the end of the path, residents would be met by a staff member who would lead them to the community center north of the plaza. The plaza is centered between three clusters of buildings which include the library/community center to the north, workshop and school building to the west and the health center and administration building to the east as seen in the perspective in figure 6.4 and floorplan in figure 6.5. The architecture of the buildings are similar to the buildings in and around coastal Maryland. Each building is covered by a butterfly and shed roof, this allows for water collection for each building each building also has solar panels for solar harvesting. Large windows face the Chesapeake Bay allowing views of the habitat islands and boardwalk.



*Figure 6.4*



*Perspective of Plaza and Community Center. Image by Author.*

*Figure 6.5*



*Floor plan of programs around central plaza. Image by Author.*

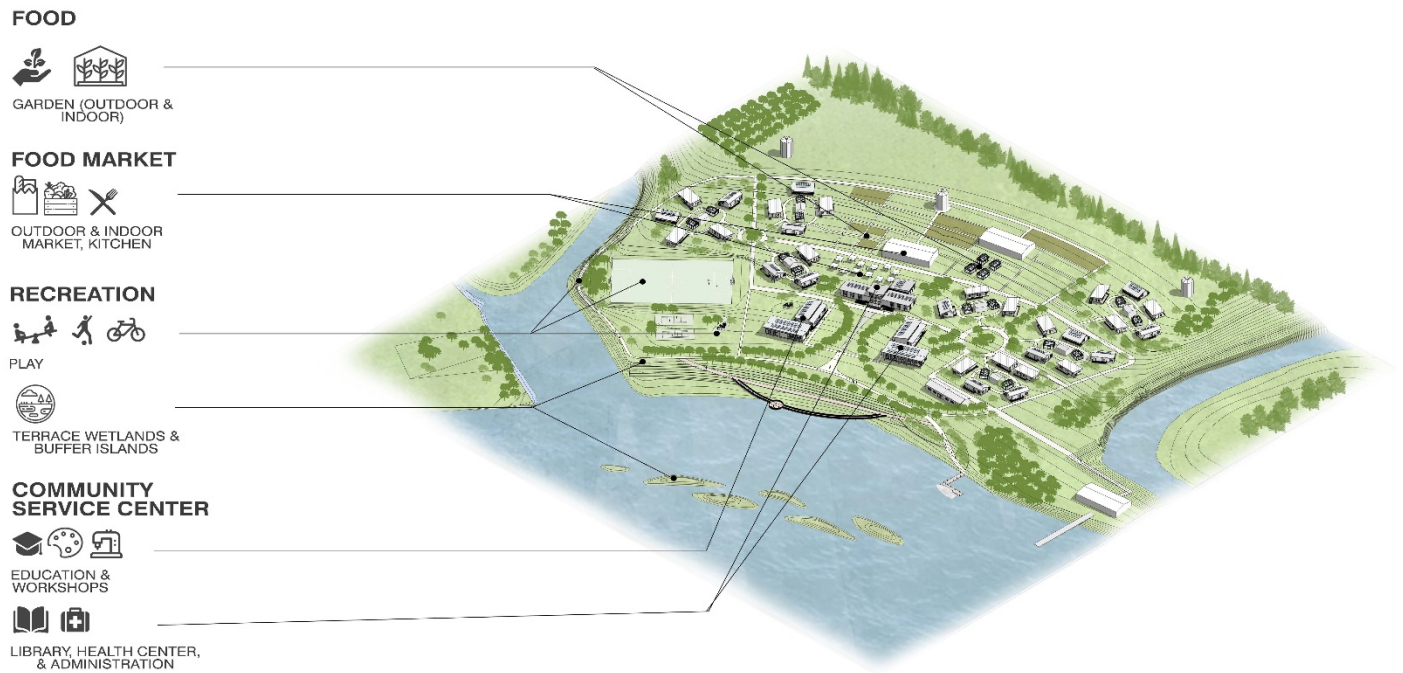
The community center and library serves as the central location for community integration and social engagement. The large atrium space in the library as well as the detached extension serves as event spaces for parties, wedding and can be used as a space for worship. An outdoor farmers market is located next to the community center providing an outdoor recreation space as well as a space for social interaction for the community. Figure 6.7 depicts various programs throughout the site, with a food hub that includes a food market and outdoor/indoor garden near the agriculture field. Recreational area south of the workshop, school building, library and plaza. The community service center provides workshops such as arts and crafts, woodwork, computer rooms, and mechanical shop. The health center is an important addition to the program, it will provide a safe, clean and well equipped facility for the residents as well as provide counseling for those with PTSD.

*Figure 6.6*



*Atrium and event space with access to outdoor farmers market. Image by Author.*

Figure 6.7



Axon of site with program location. Image by Author.

Figure 6.8



Section through agricultural field, library, plaza, wetland terrace and boardwalk. Image by Author.



Figure 6.9



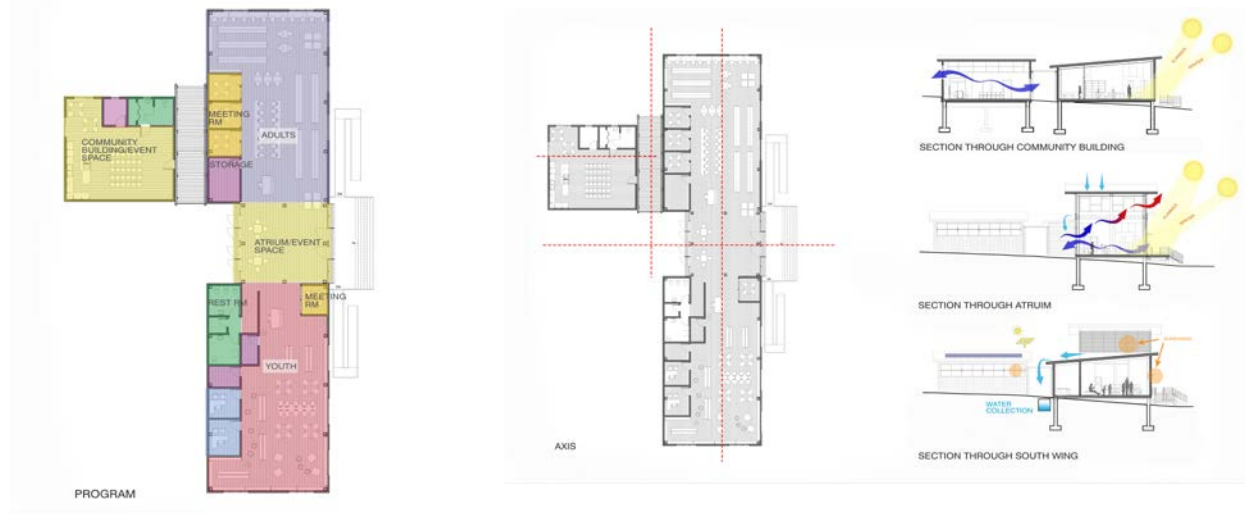
*Outdoor farmers Market and event space. Image by Author.*

Figure 6.10



*Library and community center, top right: axon. Bottom left: south and north elevation. Right: section, east and west elevation. Image by Author.*

Figure 6.11



Left: Library and community center program. Right: Sections Image by Author.

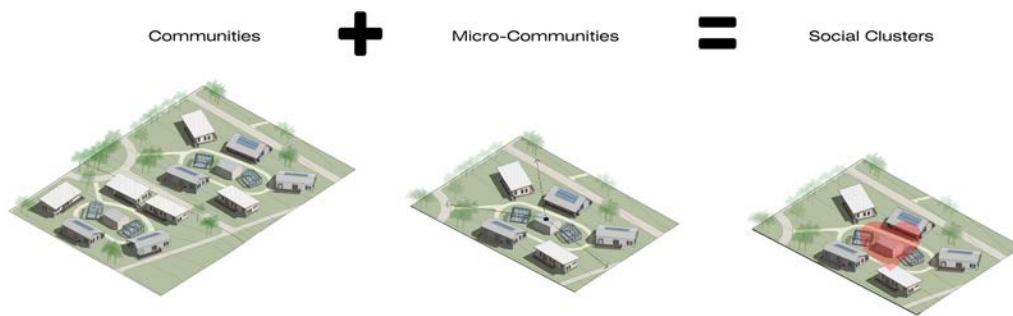
Figure 6.12



Farm and outdoor garden shared and sustained by residents. Located west of the outdoor farmers market.  
Image by Author.

Although the plaza and surrounding community service buildings promote inclusion and a place to gather and interact. The residential area within the site are designed around a central courtyard, where each neighborhood houses a small community hub. Each community hub would house certain programs allowing for cross integration between each neighborhood. At a microscale each neighborhood would create social clusters as shown in Figure 6.13.

*Figure 6.13*



*Community intervention. Image by Author.*

*Figure 6.14*

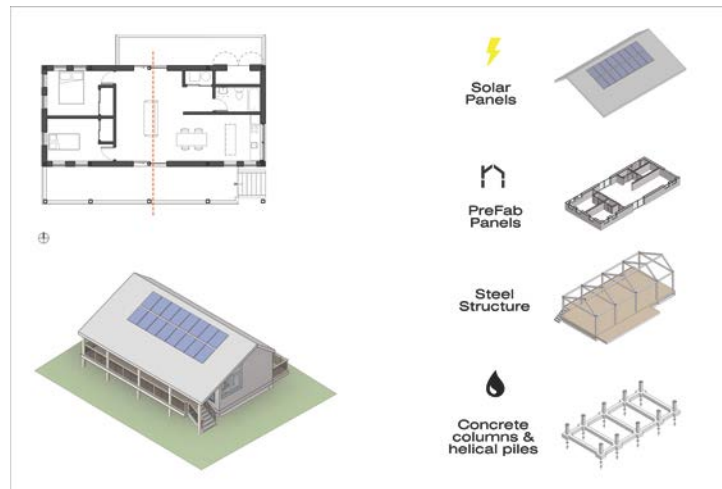


*Section through Neighborhood. Image by Author.*



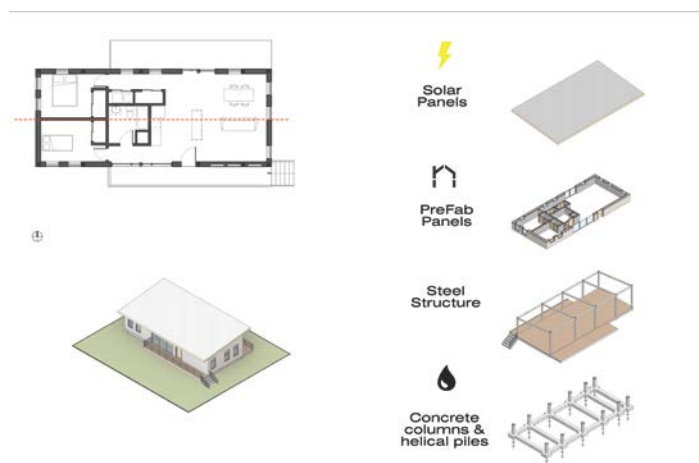
There are two types of house floorplans. Both are capable to house a family of 4 or used as dorm like apartments with roommates. For cost and efficiency, homes are made of prefabricated materials such as SIP walls (Structurally Insulated Panels) and steel structure. Each home would be constructed upon concrete columns and helical piles to ensure stability on the sandy-clay soil. Each home would also have solar panels and a water collection system for further self-sufficiency.

Figure 6.15



*House Type. 1. Image by Author.*

Figure 6.16



*House Type. 2. Image by Author.*

## Conclusion

Although, immigration is an issue that is political and architecture may seem irrelevant to the issue; it should not be ignored. Architecture and designs of prisons are not regularly taught to students, leaving many with no knowledge on how to address the issue of housing prisoners. Detention centers may have resulted in lack of design input, however; that can change. Implementing new concepts such as restorative justice, open air environment can change how centers are used. The premise of this thesis is to ultimately create a more humane environment and alternative housing to replace current immigration detention centers. It aims to bring awareness to conditions inside detention centers and the treatment of migrants. Highlighting the harmful effects of prison like settings on low level detainees is crucial for architects and designers to understand. Therefore it is important to review the impact of the architecture and design on the lives of detainees in detention centers.

Figure 6.17



*Neighborhood cluster, a place to heal, a place to socialize, a place to belong. Image by Author.*

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## **Glossary**

**Refugees & Asylees:** A refugee is a person outside his or her country of nationality who is unable or unwilling to return to his or her country of nationality because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution. An asylee is a person who meets the definition of refugee and is already present in the United States or is seeking admission at a port of entry.

**Lawful Permanent Residents:** Lawful permanent residents (LPRs), also known as “green card” holders, are non-citizens who are lawfully authorized to live permanently within the United States.

<https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics>

**Unauthorized Resident:** The unauthorized resident immigrant population is defined as all foreign-born non-citizens who are not legal residents.





